

**STATEMENT OF REP. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL  
OPERATIONS**

**Joint Hearing of the  
International Relations Committee  
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations  
and  
Armed Services Committee  
Subcommittee on Military Personnel**

**Department of Defense Implementation of Zero-Tolerance for Human  
Trafficking  
June 21, 2006**

Chairman McHugh, it is a privilege to join you in convening this hearing to examine the Department of Defense's response to the crime of trafficking in persons. I also want to thank you for working with me and my staff to incorporate directed report language concerning trafficking in the Committee's recent report for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007.

In September 2004, Chairman Hunter and I co-chaired a briefing to examine DOD's enforcement of U.S. policies against trafficking in persons. At that time, DOD and individual commanders had just begun to address the issue—primarily through the issuance of high-level directives from the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense, but had little yet to say for its implementation or the efficacy of its efforts. The one exception was in South Korea, where General LaPorte was already taking strong and decisive action to curb the involvement of U.S. Service members in creating a demand for prostitution that fuels trafficking.

Our need to examine this problem in the context of DOD arises from the fact that prostitution has historically coexisted alongside large populations of military forces. This is a problem for all militaries—not just the American military. In recent years, NGOs and the press have reported women being forced into prostitution for a clientele consisting of military service members, government contractors, and international peacekeepers. Over the past half-dozen years, such evils have been documented in South Korea, Southeastern Europe, the Congo, and Sudan. There have also been horrific accounts of international peacekeepers from several countries, thankfully not including the United States, who have purchased sex from hungry children in exchange for a piece of bread.

I was the prime sponsor of three landmark laws to end trafficking, here and abroad—the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) and the TVPA Reauthorization Acts of 2003 and 2005. For years I have focused attention on the problem of human trafficking through legislation and congressional hearings.

My focus on the U.S. military began in 2002 when Fox News reporter Tom Merriman showed me a hidden camera investigation of U.S. troops in South Korea patronizing bars and other establishments where women from the Philippines and the former Soviet states were trafficked and forced to prostitute themselves. The investigation captured U.S. soldiers on “courtesy patrol” patrolling these establishments at which U.S. soldiers are the primary customers. I have no doubt that the vast majority of U.S. Service members would never engage in such reprehensible conduct, but I was outraged to learn that some were indeed creating a demand for the trafficking of women into prostitution. At my request, the DOD Inspector General undertook investigations in South Korea and in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. The two resulting reports identified institutional weaknesses in our military’s understanding and response to trafficking and made concrete recommendations for action.

For DOD, these issues do not end with the demand-side of the equation and are not limited to sex trafficking. In testimony before the Armed Services Committee and the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2004, Martina Vandenberg, a former researcher for Human Rights Watch, described eight cases in which U.S. Government contractors—including four DOD contractors—allegedly purchased trafficked women and girls in Bosnia.

More recently, in October 2005, the *Chicago Tribune* reported on U.S. Government subcontractors trafficking Nepalese laborers through Jordan and into Iraq to work on U.S. military bases. Subsequently, the U.S. Multi-National Force-Iraq conducted an inspection of contracting activities in Iraq which confirmed the *Tribune*’s report. In April, General George Casey issued labor guidelines to all Defense contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan, with the intention of protecting employees from abuse. I look forward to hearing today about the investigations that DOD conducted, and how DOD will create a policy that affects all US installations and operations.

It is reprehensible that any person with a responsibility to protect civilians in a destabilized region or to promote the rule of law would participate in prostitution or otherwise encourage human trafficking. Speaking before the UN General Assembly in 2003, President Bush stated: “There’s a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent and vulnerable. The victims of the sex trade see little of life before they see the very worst of life—an underground of brutality and lonely fear. Those who create these victims and profit from their suffering must be severely punished. Those who patronize this industry debase themselves and deepen the misery of others.” U.S. military or contractor involvement in trafficking weakens the rule of law, strengthens criminal networks, and undermines DOD’s own mission. If a U.S. Government representative, or even a contractor paid by U.S. taxpayer funds, engages in actions that allow prostitution and human trafficking to prosper, the efforts of our President, the State Department, and Congress to combat this criminal scourge are thwarted.

Only when DOD and the U.S. military take an uncompromising position on the issues of prostitution and trafficking will we be in a position to effectively push international organizations and other countries to do the same. I continue to be deeply troubled by the slow pace of reform at the United Nations, and have conducted two hearings on the sexual exploitation and abuse in the UN’s peacekeeping operation in the Congo. Since early 2004, the UN has conducted investigations on sexual exploitation involving 296 personnel, which have resulted in the repatriation of 137 military personnel, including six commanders, and the

dismissal of 17 civilians and 16 police. Most of these cases occurred at UN missions in Africa. But according to the State Department's 2006 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, "it may take months or even years before an effective measure is put into practice." Ladies and Gentlemen, women and children cannot wait "months or even years" to be safe from abuse. Bureaucracy is no excuse for tolerating exploitation. The United States, and all countries of goodwill, must redouble our efforts at the UN to move forward on these issues.

Now that sound policies are for the most part set, DOD has the difficult task of ensuring their implementation. DOD's anti-trafficking initiatives must rise above individual personalities who themselves understand why we need to prevent trafficking. Anti-trafficking efforts must become part of DOD's organizational culture and infrastructure. Despite some progress, I am concerned that this is not yet the case.

Chairman McHugh, again I thank you and your staff for working with the global human rights subcommittee to address this important issue. I look forward to hearing our witnesses' testimony.